

Developing a research strategy for London's historic environment

A team drawn from the LAARC and the CBA is working with Peter Rowsome, as consultant to formulate how to realise the potential of the archaeology and research resources of the capital over the next five years.

Peter Rowsome describes the task in hand.

Work is now underway on the development of a research strategy for the historic environment of Greater London. Many of you will already be familiar with two earlier documents, the resource assessment (*The Archaeology of Greater London*, Museum of London 2000) and the research agenda (*A research framework for London archaeology*, Museum of London 2002), and the research strategy will form the third and final piece of the jigsaw.

The work is being supported by English Heritage as part of their initiative to establish regional research frameworks nationally. More than anything else, the London research strategy project is a massive consultation exercise. It hopes to identify the big opportunities and challenges ahead of us for the coming five years, and it is up to everyone, whether amateur or professional, to say what they think are the most important issues. The resulting strategy should provide the basis for:

- more effective management of the historic environment resource, supporting local authority decision-making
- identifying research priorities to help focus scarce resources, whilst facilitating collaborative research and creating additional research opportunities
- realising the potential of London's historic environment records and archives
- identifying ways to improve the dissemination of research to the widest range of users

It is important that the research strategy builds on what has already been achieved whilst also helping

participants to tap into the enormous potential for further research at a synthetic level. It should promote a broad range of research initiatives, involving archaeologists, historians and other academics as well as conservation and local government officers, members of community groups, education authorities and the general public, opening up new funding streams and opportunities.

The consultation started in June with a series of seminars at the LAARC. You may have received an invitation to one of these and perhaps have already attended a discussion. If not then you

still have time to contribute, as the consultation will continue until the autumn. Research is of course a big topic and can seem daunting. 'Where do we start?' and 'What's in it for me?' are common questions, so we have tried to get the ball rolling and start some debate by drafting a review of recent research (since the millennium) to provide some examples of ongoing work and prompt you to tell us what is missing.

The research review and other project information, including a web forum and a questionnaire, can be found on a dedicated project website, hosted and maintained by the LAARC (see box below for details). We will also be sending out postal questionnaires and leaflets and contacting people by telephone and email to ask for their advice and input. Following the consultation a research strategy document will be posted on the website and circulated for further comment. The document will be completed in early 2009, with publication to follow, but that won't mark the end of the project, which will be the subject of active review through annual seminars and a website.

If you have any comments or suggestions right now or later on, please do send them to us by email (details below). We will be posting information and regular updates about the project on the website so have a look and please take part.

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ABOVE: A member of LAARC staff cataloguing some of the Museum's extensive collection of excavated worked stone.

To find out more, visit the London Research Strategy website:
www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk/English/ArchiveResearch/ResearchStrat

To contribute comments or suggestions up to October 2008, email:
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